

essence of democracy. Why can't "the world's largest democracy" hold a simple vote on this fundamental question?

Madam Speaker, I would like to insert the Council of Khalistan's letter to Jathedar Vedanti into the RECORD at this time for the information of the American people.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN,

Washington, DC, January 9, 2007.

S. JOGINDER SINGH VEDANTI,
Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Golden Temple,
Aarnritsar, Punjab, India

DEAR JATHEDAR VEDANTI: I am writing to you about the Dasam Granth, which you have been promoting as the genuine writing of Guru Gobind Singh. The issue of its authorship was settled long ago. As you know, the authors of the Dasam Granth identify themselves within the text and only a small part is written by Guru Gobind Singh. The rest was appended by Hindu writers looking to harm the Sikh religion. Much of it is pornographic. For a jathedar of the Akal Takht to promote it as genuine Sikh scripture, especially since Guru Gobind Singh left the Guruship in the Guru Granth Sahib, is harmful to the Sikh religion and the Sikh Nation. Sikhs should bow only to the Guru Granth Sahib, nothing else.

The Dasam Granth is not the real issue. Do not get sidetracked, and do not sidetrack the Sikh Nation from the real issue, freedom and sovereignty for Khalistan. Do not let this controversy divert and waste the resources of the Sikh Nation from the preservation of our religion and culture.

It is vitally important that the Akal Takht Jathedar, the spiritual leader of the Sikh religion, be committed to the well-being of the Sikh Nation. Preserving its history, religion, culture, and scripture is essential to that well-being, especially when it is under assault from Hindus who are trying to subsume the Sikh religion and culture into those of the Hindus as part of Hindutva. Remember that a former Cabinet minister said that everyone who lives in India must either be a Hindu or be subservient to Hindus. But also remember the words of your predecessor, Professor Darshan Singh, who said, "If a Sikh is not a Khalistani, he is not a Sikh."

Jathedar Vedanti, the duty of the Jathedar of the Akal Takht is to protect, promote, and disseminate the Sikh religion. How can we do that within the framework of India when India is working to destroy the Sikh religion? The experience of the Jewish people shows that when a nation has sovereignty, it flourishes, but when it does not it perishes.

The only way to preserve, promote, and disseminate the Sikh religion and culture is in a free and sovereign Khalistan. Yet when Sikh leaders in Punjab were arrested last year simply for making speeches and raising the Khalistani flag, we did not hear a word of protest from the Akal Takht. Nor did we hear a protest of the actions of the Badal government in Punjab, the most corrupt in Punjab's history. The Badal government even sold jobs—they called it "fee for service" and Mrs. Badal was able to tell how much money was in a bag just by picking it up.

Please do not let your energy be diverted to issues like the Dasam Granth, which has long become known to be altered. We need every Sikh to help bring freedom, dignity, prosperity, and security in a free, sovereign, independent Khalistan. Discussion of issues like the Dasam Granth merely diverts the Khalsa Panth from freedom and sets back the cause of protecting the Khalsa Panth.

Panth Da Sewadar,

DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH,

President, Council of Khalistan.

IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S IRAQ "SURGE" SPEECH

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, last night, the president announced that he will escalate the war in Iraq. Still in his cloud of denial, Mr. Bush seems to believe that he can achieve some ill-defined "victory" by perpetuating America's involvement in a bloody civil war halfway around the world. It is unclear what such a victory would look like, let alone how it might be achieved. Mr. Bush's "troop surge" is not a strategy; it is a desperate, last-ditch effort to allow the president to avoid admitting that his war of choice has been a failure.

Generals and foreign policy experts alike agree that adding 21,500 more troops to the quagmire in Iraq will have little effect on either our chances for "victory" or the safety and stability of the Iraqi nation. Indeed, President Bush chose this course of action against the unanimous opposition of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and most of the commanders on the ground in Iraq. Everyone except the president seems to realize that the essential problem in Iraq requires a political solution, not a military one. The American people understand it, as they demonstrated overwhelmingly last November. Yet the president wants to put even more American troops in harm's way for no strategic advantage. He persists in his foolhardy escalation, apparently more concerned with preserving his legacy as "the president who didn't lose Iraq" than with the well-being of either our brave troops or the Iraqi people.

An escalation in Iraq will do nothing to improve America's security; on the contrary, it will undermine it. Our military is already stretched to the breaking point, and Mr. Bush's "surge" will cause additional damage that will take billions of dollars and many years to fix. Exactly none of the military's active duty or reserve brigades is considered "combat ready." Only thirty percent of equipment considered "essential" to homeland security is on-hand here at home. Should disaster strike here at home or elsewhere in the world, we will be left virtually defenseless while our troops and equipment are bogged down in an unwinnable war that threatens to drag on for years, if not decades.

While Mr. Bush claims to have been "listening" to the advice of military and foreign policy experts over the last months, he seems to have emerged as stubbornly committed to his failed policy as ever. It is up to the Congress to put an end to this madness. I particularly want to call on my friends on the other side of the aisle to listen to the voices of their constituents, the everyday Americans who understand what we have at stake in this war in a way that the president has proven himself incapable of doing. We cannot throw away more American lives. We cannot mortgage our children's futures to further enrich war profiteers. We cannot continue to contribute to the devastation of Iraq.

The president seems unable to comprehend that American military might is not the answer to all the world's problems. But the American people do understand. They know that there is only one way forward in Iraq. We must begin the phased withdrawal of American troops in

the next four to six months. We must change our mission from combat to training and logistical assistance for Iraqi forces. We must provide the economic assistance the Iraqis need to repair their devastated society and give whatever help they require in moving their political process forward. This is the only way to achieve any sort of victory in Iraq.

THE INDEPENDENT STUDY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION ACT OF 2007

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Independent Study of Distance Education Act of 2007. This bill requires that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) conduct a scientifically correct, statistically valid study of the quality of distance education programs as compared to campus-based programs.

Allow me to provide some background on congressional actions related to distance education. During the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, Congress passed a rule to counter fraud and abuse perpetuated by diploma mills and some correspondence programs in the 1980s. This rule, known as the "50-percent rule", prevents any college or university that enrolls more than 50 percent of its students in distance education or provides more than half of its courses via distance education from participating in federal financial aid programs.

During the 1998 reauthorization, Congress recognized that, with changes in technology, schools are increasingly offering courses via distance education. The Distance Education Demonstration Program was established to examine the quality and viability of expanding distance education programs. This demo program allowed 24 colleges and universities to waive several program requirements for participating in the federal financial aid programs, including the 50-percent rule, in exchange for participating in studies by the Secretary of Education.

The Secretary provided Congress with three studies of the Distance Education Demonstration Program. The Secretary found that the "mode of distance education delivery does not appear to be a salient factor in student outcomes." However, in 2004, the Office of the Inspector General found that the Secretary's conclusions about the impact of distance education methods on student learning was unsupported, fostering uncertainty about the quality of distance education programs as compared to the quality of campus-based programs.

As a scientist, I strive to base my policy decisions and voting on reliable studies and data. Unfortunately, when it comes to the Higher Education Act and distance education, there is no scientifically correct, statistically valid study of the quality of distance education programs as compared to campus-based programs.

You may think that this has halted congressional action related to distance education programs. Certainly, it would be prudent to know whether distance education is effective before allowing for the rapid proliferation of federal financial aid funds going to students in such programs.

However, in 2005, as part of the Deficit Reduction Act, Congress repealed the "50-percent rule", which could potentially result in rapid expansion of distance education programs. While the House-version of this bill included an amendment I offered to have the National Academy of Sciences conduct a study, this provision was stripped out during conference because of the arcane "Byrd rule," which prohibits provisions without a fiscal impact in budget reconciliation bills.

Please know that I am not against distance education. In fact, as a K–12 student, I completed correspondence courses by distance. But, before we spend more federal dollars on this, we need to know more about the quality of distance education programs, as compared to campus-based programs. Simply put, the Independent Study of Distance Education Act will provide scientifically correct, statistically valid information on which to base future votes and policy decisions related to distance education programs.

I urge all Members to support this important legislation.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, this week presents Congress the chance to deal with some long overdue business.

It's been more than nine years since the Minimum Wage was increased. It's been nearly six years since the President cut off federal funding for stem cell research. And, it's been nearly two and a half years since the 9/11 Commission released its recommendations.

Its recommendations were a clear road map to what the Government needed to do to reduce the chances of another terrorist attack and prepare if we were to be attacked again. But many of the recommendations went unheeded.

In December 2005, the Commission gave the government a shameful report card—17 D's and F's. An F because our first responders still can't communicate with each other. An F for failing to screen airline passengers. And an F for basing Homeland Security funding on politics instead of risk.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we will turn these F's to A's—from failure to action.

The bill before us is a strong first step for this Congress towards securing our country and preventing another 9/11. I am proud to say that this bill includes a provision to create a director of non-proliferation within the White House to coordinate efforts at the Departments of Defense, Energy and State.

This provision was introduced in the 108th Congress, and again in the 109th Congress, by myself, Mrs. TAUSCHER and Mr. SPRATT, and believe that it is crucial to our efforts to create a comprehensive strategy to deal with the threats of Weapons of Mass Destruction. I was proud to work with both Mrs. TAUSCHER and Mr. SPRATT on this provision and I thank them for their leadership on this issue.

After today, America will be a safer place. 9/11 must never happen again. I strongly encourage members to vote in favor of it.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLIE NORWOOD

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. NORWOOD. Madam Speaker, on roll-call No. 17; On Motion to Recommit with Instructions (H.R. 2). Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

IN RECOGNITION OF JOHN A. MCGINNESS, FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO LOCAL 12 OF THE UNITED ASSOCIATION OF JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES OF THE PLUMBING AND PIPE FITTING INDUSTRY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of a man whose professional life has been dedicated to improving the lives of working men and women in Massachusetts, across our nation and beyond our borders. Jack McGinness is a remarkable labor leader with a long and illustrious career in the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada.

Brother Jack McGinness, the youngest of six children, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts to William and Anne McGinness. He grew up in the City of Cambridge and graduated from Cambridge High and Latin School. After graduation, Jack honorably served our country by enlisting in the United States Marine Corps.

Jack was initiated into the Plumbers Apprenticeship Program on September 28, 1964. In his first year, Jack worked for the George Murphy Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Following the completion of his five year apprentice training program, Jack worked as a plumber and foreman for U.A. Contractors within the jurisdiction of Local 12 but also other U.A. contractors on the road in the U.S. and Canada.

During his tenure, brother McGinness served as a member of Plumbers Local 12, as an officer on Local 12's Joint Conference Board, Executive Board, the Apprentice Committee as well as served as Trustee for the Local 12 Health and Welfare Fund, delegate to the United Association's National Convention in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2006. Brother McGinness served on the Sergeant of Arms Committee from 2001 until 2006. He was elected Business Agent in 1994.

Jack's dedication to the men and women of the Building Trades has been regularly acknowledged by his peers. He was elected by his brothers and sisters of labor to serve as President of the Framingham-Newton Building Trades Council as well as to serve on the State Building Trades Executive Board as a Delegate to the National Building Trades Convention in 2001 and 2005.

Anyone who has had the privilege to work along side Jack knows that he is a dedicated

and thoughtful individual, concerned primarily for the safety and welfare of his union brothers and sisters and their families.

Beyond his professional commitment, Jack devoted much of his time to developing Local 12's annual participation in Dads' Day and Toys for Tots as well as the Local 12 Golf Committee and the Local 12 Social Committee.

Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honor to take the Floor of the House today to join with Jack McGinness' family, friends and brothers and sisters of labor to thank him for more than forty years of remarkable service to the American Labor Movement. I hope my Colleagues will join me in celebrating Jack's distinguished career and wishing him good health and God's blessing in all his future endeavors.

BOBBY GOLD REMEMBERED

HON. BRAD ELLSWORTH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Bobby L. Gold, a man who dedicated his life's work to the concerns of poor, elderly and minority residents of Evansville, Indiana. Mr. Gold passed away on Thursday, January 4 at the age 61.

He began his advocacy in the 1960s, fighting for civil rights and against poverty in Evansville. His work in public service included the Community Action Program of Evansville and the AARP Senior Community Service Employment Program.

During his life, Mr. Gold sought to improve opportunities for the children of Evansville, especially those from low income backgrounds. While serving as a youth counselor for the Community Action Program of Evansville, he worked for the creation of a school breakfast program. He also recruited high school and college students to tutor local elementary school students in math and reading.

In his last years of his life, Mr. Gold devoted his time to the Evansville Housing Authority. His activism for public housing was enhanced by passion and understanding that being a resident of that system provided. He pushed for a zero tolerance policy for illegal drugs on the property of the housing authority to promote safety and security for residents. Even as his health deteriorated near the end of his life, Mr. Gold remained interested and involved in the work of the Housing Authority.

For his hard work, Mr. Gold was bestowed with the Indiana State Human Rights Award in 1999, and in September 2005 Evansville Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel presented him with a Celebration of Diversity Award.

Throughout his life, Mr. Gold was a strong voice for those in the Evansville community who needed it most. The people of Evansville have lost a dear friend and outspoken advocate. Bobby Gold will be missed, but his spirit of public service will live on. I'm proud to call him my friend.